



The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act:
Effective Education for Homeless Children and Youth in Vermont
October 1, 2008 Update

Welcome... and thank you for serving as the **Homeless Education Liaison** for your supervisory union or school district. Every SU/SD in the state has designated a Liaison and so we have in place a statewide network of Liaisons serving as the resource for Vermont's schools. If you are new to this position, you have been contacted by a staff member of the Vermont Homeless Children and Youth Project (see below) for a personal orientation to the requirements of the **McKinney Vento Law**, the responsibilities of a Homeless Education Liaison, and the resources available to support your success.

The McKinney Vento "Red" Packets... have been distributed to all Liaisons. If you have not received your packet..or if you would like to order additional packets..please contact Lisa Champney at lisa.champney@state.vt.us or 828.6574. All the materials in the red packet are available online at the Vermont Department of Education's Homeless Education website: http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm_homeless.html

The **definition of homeless status** is right on the front page for easy access. Take a moment and bookmark this site. I would like to thank **Lisa Champney**, Administrative Assistant for Education for Homeless Children and Youth, for her work in designing our website and all of the materials in the red packet.

This year, we have included in the packet a list of **Homeless Education Liaisons** statewide so you can see who your colleagues are and can coordinate services to students. This list is also online and is updated as needed. As in past years, the red packet includes all information on the **McKinney Vento Law**, including a copy of the legislation and a handy summary by topic area as an easy reference. The **Getting It Right** flowchart offers an overview of the process of identification and enrollment of homeless students at the school level. The packet also includes:

- **Referral to Homeless Education Liaison form**

http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/pgm_homeless/toolbox/referral_form_0908.pdf

- **Homeless Liaison Worksheet for Determining Homeless Status and School Enrollment**...a step by step guide that includes McKinney Vento Law requirements and allows you to document and track student information

http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/pgm_homeless/toolbox/liaison_worksheet_0708.pdf

- A print copy of the **McKinney Vento Homeless Education Act: Effective Education for Homeless Children and Youth in Vermont power point**...a self tutorial and training tool for Liaisons...available on the website

http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/pgm_homeless/toolbox/homeless_education_0808.pdf

- **Sample posters** to display in all schools (with an 800 number on the poster to order additional copies without charge)

We developed a **Liaison Self Assessment Tool**...with a checklist of Liaison responsibilities...to guide your work and to make sure that you are in compliance with McKinney Vento Law requirements. This self assessment tool serves as a **position description and will be used later in the year as a monitoring tool** to guide our technical assistance and training.

Training and Technical Assistance for Schools...is provided by the Vermont Homeless Children and Youth Project. The VHCYP has a new state coordinator, **Mike Mulcahy**, who joins the Vermont Department of Education from the Vermont Parent Information Center (now merged with Parent to Parent of Vermont as the "Vermont Family Network") where Mike served as the Family Support Program Director. Mike also currently serves as the state coordinator for the Vermont Educational Surrogate Program. He is based in Montpelier and can be reached at 828.5108 or mike.mulcahy@state.vt.us.

Your first call for technical assistance is to your VHCYP staff person listed on the VHCYP brochure is included in your packet and on the website at:

http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/pgm_homeless/homeless_brochure_0908.pdf

- **Central and South Region**...Jane Munroe at 483.2198
- **Chittenden Region**...Sally Williams at 233.1832, and
- **North Region**...Donna Griffin at 863.3124

Our 2008-2009 Focus for Homeless Education is to Track, Train, Team...

Track...The primary responsibility of a Liaison is to identify and facilitate the enrollment of homeless students. The definition of homeless focuses on whether a student has a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. Use the **Liaison Worksheet** for each student to guide this process and keep all referral forms and

worksheets in your **Simple Information System notebook**. If you have not received a notebook, contact Lisa Champney (see above).

You will need to report to the Department of Education at the end of the school year on the number of homeless students identified and enrolled by grade level, as well as the number of students who resided hotels/motels or shelters, who were doubled up with other families, or who were unsheltered (campground/car/tent).

Train Yourself...so that you can serve as a resource for your SU/SD by receiving an orientation and viewing the McKinney Vento Power point presentation.

Train your school community...so that you have a network of colleagues to identify students experiencing homelessness and refer them to you...using the **McKinney Vento Power point presentation, the Referral Form, and the Getting It Right Flowchart.**

Team Up...with the Liaisons from other SU/SDs. **The Liaison serving the area where a student currently resides is responsible for determining homeless status..but it is best practice to coordinate this process as well as school enrollment and student services with the Liaison from the SU/SD where the student was formerly enrolled (school of origin).** An updated list of all Liaisons is on the Homeless Education website.

Vermont has seen a dramatic increase in the number of students experiencing homelessness, as well as request for housing assistance from school staff. During school year 2006-2007, 838 students were identified and enrolled; in the past year, 2007-2008, that number is expected to increase. And, based on the number of technical assistance requests in the past two months, we expect a significant increase this school year. Liaisons are responsible for educational continuity. But if you have requests from families for housing assistance or other services, your first call is to the **Economic Services Office** for your region. **Regional Economic Services Offices are listed at:**

http://www.dcf.vermont.gov/esd/contact_us/district_offices

Questions and Issues...

"Is there a time limit for homeless status?"

The McKinney Vento Law does not provide a time limit for homeless status. Homeless status is in place to support educational continuity for the student during a time of crisis. It is best practice to review homeless status if it has been in place for significant period of time, and it is important to verify homeless status prior to the end of the school year. If a student continues to be homeless during the summer, the student has the right to continue to attend the school of origin during the following school year.

"Do I wait to enroll a student who does not have a legal guardian?" need

The McKinney Vento Law requires **immediate enrollment** for a student who has been designated as homeless. Guardianship issues, as well as medical records, school records, etc, should be addressed after a student has been safely enrolled in school. This guardianship fact sheet from the **Nation Center for Homeless Education** describes the McKinney Vento Law requirements and includes a **sample caregiver authorization form** used in California and other states.

<http://www.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/guardianship.pdf>

Legal Assistance...for complicated homeless education issues is available from the **National Center on Homelessness and Poverty**. Eric Tars serves as the homeless education lawyer at the Center. Please contact Wendy Ross, State Coordinator for Education for Homeless Children and Youth, to coordinate this service.

Wendy.ross@state.vt.us or 828.5148.

Resources and Links:

U.S. Department of Education Guidance: Guidance on Homeless Children with Disabilities

This Q&A document, issued by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), provides state and local educational officials, early intervention services providers, and homeless assistance coordinators with information to assist with the implementation of the requirements of the IDEA and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

<http://www.serve.org/nche/m-v.php#guidance>

The McKinney Vento Act At A Glance: A Law Into Practice Brief from the National Center on Homeless Education (NCHE)

This brief provides an overview of the provisions of the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

Strategies for School Success for Homeless Students:

An article from the **Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota** examines protective factors and intervention methods that may promote school success among homeless and highly mobile students. School success in motion: Protective factors for academic achievement in homeless and highly mobile children in Minneapolis can be downloaded from the NCHE website at

http://www.serve.org/nche/downloads/masten_high_mob.pdf

Foreclosures: The Impact on Children and Youth

As the mortgage crisis burdens the U.S. stock market, housing market, and general economy, school districts are also noticing a concurrent effect on the number of students experiencing homelessness. A recent brief from **First Focus** estimates that, over the next two years, an estimated two million children will be directly impacted by the mortgage crisis as their families lose their homes due to foreclosures. These children are not just losing their homes; they also risk losing their friends, schools, and general sense of stability.

Learn more by visiting NCHE's new *Foreclosures/Mortgage Crises and Their Effects on Education* webpage at <http://www.serve.org/nche/ibt/foreclose.php>. Also visit NCHE's *Homeless Education in the News* webpage at <http://www.serve.org/nche/news.php> to see how the issue is being covered by news media.

Higher Education Act Reauthorization: Homeless and Foster Youth

Youth experiencing homelessness or in foster care face numerous barriers to higher education. Inadequate college readiness, the complexity of the financial aid process, and lack of housing and support services once enrolled in college make obtaining a college degree an often insurmountable challenge. Yet a college education offers these youth the best opportunity to escape poverty and realize their dreams.

In late summer, Congress passed, and the President signed, the Higher Education Opportunity Act, H.R. 4137. This legislation reauthorizes the Higher Education Act. It includes numerous amendments designed to increase homeless and foster students' access to postsecondary education.

College Preparation and Support Programs: The Federal TRIO programs consist of programs that support at-risk junior high and high school students to graduate from high school, enter college, and complete their degrees. These programs include Talent Search, Upward Bound, Student Support Services, Educational Opportunity Centers, Staff Development Activities, and Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR-UP). Students experiencing homelessness or in foster care are at great risk of academic failure due to their extreme poverty and residential instability, yet, prior to this reauthorization, they were not specifically mentioned or targeted by any of the TRIO programs.

The Higher Education Act now:

- Requires each applicant for TRIO programs to identify and make available services, including mentoring, tutoring, and other services, to homeless children and youth, or youth in foster care (including youth who have left foster care after reaching age 13).

- Makes homeless children and youth, or youth in foster care (including youth who have left foster care after reaching age 13), automatically eligible for TRIO programs.
- Includes as permissible services under the federal TRIO programs and GEAR UP program activities specially designed for homeless children and youth and for students who are in foster care or aging out of the foster care system.
- Amends the purpose of the Student Support Services Program to foster an institutional climate supportive of success in postsecondary education for homeless children and youth and students who are in foster care or aging out of foster care.
- Includes as a permissible service under the Student Support Services Program assistance in securing temporary housing during breaks in the academic year for homeless students and students who are in foster care or are aging out of the foster care system.
- Includes as content in training programs under Staff Development Activities strategies for recruiting and serving homeless children and youth and students who are in foster care or aging out of the foster care system.
- Requires entities not using a cohort approach for GEAR UP to include homeless children and youth and youth in foster care as priority students.